

## Childhood Memories

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During the Civil War, Mrs. Mary Hope's property located in Thomaston (Marengo County) Alabama was called the Eaton's Place. This land was an old cotton field that her ancestors, who were formerly slaves on the property, inherited from their owners.

Mrs. Hope's mother was a native of Marengo County and her father was a native of Perry County. As a child, her family moved to Birmingham so that she could receive a quality education. Her grandmother and great-grandmother remained on the family property. To help these ladies manage the land, tend the crops, and do chores they could not do, her parents would travel between Birmingham and Marengo County each week. Her father planted enough crops (corn, wheat, watermelon, muscadines, and other fruit and vegetables) to last throughout the winter for the family and neighbors in the community. Mrs. Hope remembers reading and playing games under a very large oak tree while her parents tended the farm and planted the most beautiful flowers in the garden.

After graduation, Mrs. Hope taught school at the Fairfield Institute in Fairfield (near Birmingham) and was named director of the Science Department. Later, after marrying and moving to New York, she taught in the New York School system. She subsequently moved to Boston and served as Dean of Student Affairs at Massachusetts Institute of Technology for twelve years. Mrs. Hope was an educator for more than forty years.

While living up North, Mrs. Hope visited Alabama at least five or six times a year. She said, "No matter where I live, Alabama is always home."

Following her mother's suggestion, Mrs. Hope contacted the Alabama

Forestry Commission for management advice. She and Alan Black, former Marengo County Forester, established a great relationship. He told her about the different cost share programs and even looked after her property since she was an absentee landowner. He gave her tips as to how to become a good steward of the land. Mrs. Hope traveled often, so in the early 1980's she chose to grow timber as it was less confining. Her very first

tasks have been completed on this farm including wildlife management.

Kenneth Leslie, the present Marengo County Forester, sparked Mrs. Hope's knowledge about the TREASURE Forest Program. He completed a TREASURE Forest Management plan on her 81 acres, and with his assistance she was certified as a TREASURE Forest landowner on September 18, 2001.

Her future plans are to landscape the home site and plant wildflowers, ornamentals, fruit trees, and a rose garden. She truly wants to return the homeplace as she remembers it from her childhood. She also wants to put the property back into production and do better land management. Mrs. Hope simply wants to enjoy God's beautiful creation. One of her sayings is, "God doesn't make any more land, we need to take care of what He has given us." And

that is exactly what she is doing. She takes pride in owning and maintaining the property because of the unique way it was obtained by her ancestors. They were able to maintain it during a period of economic distress. Mrs. Hope retains the original deed to the land given to her grandmother back in 1916, as well as pictures of her ancestors who lived on the property.

Mrs. Hope now resides in Birmingham in the house that her mother built. She still enjoys trips to the farm with her daughters when she is not traveling. Her 96-year-old cousin, Josephine McClain, is the oldest member of their family and even now resides on the property. Mrs. Hope enjoys spending time with her and listening to her tell stories from the past. She also loves to watch the children in the community playing and enjoying the land, making their own memories. 🌿



Mary Hope as a young girl on the farm (top left); after graduating from Alabama State (top right); and now.

planting was nine acres. Since then, she has had three additional plantings. She received cost-share assistance under the FIP (Forestry Incentive Program). In addition to the planting of timber, many other